

## **Chapter 4**

### **Evaluation of the Regional Transportation Plans**

#### **4-A. Criteria for RTP Evaluation**

Since the mid 1980s the CTC has requested the Department review RTPs and provide an in-depth evaluation report relating to the general scope, content and planning issues in the plans. Over the years some regional planning agencies have expressed concern that the Department evaluations were becoming too subjective and the evaluation was not based on the Guideline requirements.

To reduce subjectivity, the CTC sponsored task force suggested there be a simple planning checklist within the Guidelines. This checklist would identify only the requirements required by state or federal statute and these would constitute the criteria for the CTC required evaluation report developed by The Department. The checklist would be submitted by the RTPAs with their adopted plans to ensure that all requirements were met. This checklist is known as "Appendix A" in the 1999 RTP Guidelines. A copy of the checklist is also provided as Appendix B in this evaluation report.

In addition to the state and federal requirements, the RTP Guidelines also provides supplemental transportation planning guidance. This planning information is provided in Appendix D, Regional Transportation Plan Details (page D-1) of the 1999 Guidelines.

This Evaluation Report assesses how well the plans conform to the CTC adopted guidelines, specifically with respect to Appendix A and makes recommendations for regional transportation planning process improvements.

#### **4-B. Regional Transportation Plan Checklist**

With the development of the CTC Guidelines, The Department staff agreed the RTP Evaluation Report would be based on a predetermined checklist of state and federal requirements. The checklist is composed of the following eight sections:

- A. Regional Transportation Plan Components
- B. Public Involvement

- C. Policy Element
- D. Action Element
- E. Consistency Requirement
- F. Performance Measurement
- G. Environmental Considerations
- H. Supporting Data.

#### **4–C. Regional Transportation Plan Evaluation Findings**

The findings identified in this section are based solely on the requirements contained in the 1999 RTP Guidelines, specifically Appendix A; the planning requirements checklist. This checklist identified all state and federally required items that must be contained in each adopted RTP. These items range from specifying the three required elements in the RTP (Policy, Action and Financial) to ensuring adequate public participation throughout the RTP process.

The following sections provide an evaluation of the primary areas identified in the RTP Guidelines checklist. A more thorough evaluation of each specific checklist item is contained in Appendix B of this report. This evaluation report describes how all of the adopted RTPs as a whole conform to the RTP Guidelines, not specifically identifying the shortfalls of any one particular RTP. However this evaluation report does identify specific RTPs that have demonstrated good RTP development practices.

#### **Regional Transportation Plan Components**

##### Background

The development of an RTP is based upon state and federal statutory and regulatory requirements, in addition to CTC recommendations. State law requires each MPO/RTPA to prepare and adopt an RTP directed at achieving a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system (Government Code §65080). State law also directs each RTP to include the following three components:

***Policy Element*** – To reflect the mobility goals, policies and objectives of the region.

***Action Element*** – To identify the programs and actions to implement the RTP

***Financial Element*** – To summarize the cost of implementing the projects in the RTP considering a financially constrained environment.

Each RTP should also consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the transportation plans of cities, counties and tribal governments (Government Code §65080). The

plan is required to have a 10-year and 20-year time horizon. Federal regulations (Title 23, CFR Sec. 450.316) state the RTPs must also be consistent with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and American Disabilities Act of 1990. In addition, for air quality purposes, federal regulations require the RTPs conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) were applicable (Title 42, CFR Sec. 7506).

### Evaluation Findings

The overwhelming majority of the regional transportation plans submitted to the CTC and the Department did not included an adequate response to the above mentioned required plan components. Specifically the identification of a 10-year and 20 year time frame was problematic. In addition, most of the plans omitted the analysis of land use and transportation relationship as related to projected housing, employment and environmental changes.

The Action Element of the RTP should describe the analysis of these and other interdependent impacts that constitute long-range transportation planning. Many plans however simply include a discussion for the need to do comprehensive transportation planning but didn't actually do the job. It appears that many plans acknowledged the requirements but fell short of assuming the responsibility to actually do the necessary planning.

*A best practices example of an RTP that addressed all the required components is the 2001 RTP prepared by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). The RTP clearly identifies the three elements required to make up a plan and clearly identified the relationship between the RTP and other planning documents (i.e. SIP and general plans). It also is presented in such a format that made it easy to locate specific information.*

## **Public Involvement**

### Background

Public Involvement is a major component of the RTP process. Federal regulation requires that each MPO have a transportation planning process that includes a public involvement program (Title 23 Sec. 134, 135; Title 23 CFR 450.316). This program should have a reasonable opportunity for the general public, operators of transit and freight systems, airport operators, tribal governments and other interested/affected parties to participate early in the RTP development process.

Federal regulation also requires the development of the RTP to be based on consultation with air quality and environmental agencies (Title 40, CFR Sec. 93.105).

### Evaluation Findings

The overwhelming majority of the RTPs identified an active public involvement process. In addition, Department staff is aware of public involvement activities that were not identified in the RTPs. However, the guidelines are very specific in requiring documentation of consultation with specific agencies at all stages in the development of the plan. The overwhelming majority of the plans in air quality non-attainment areas did not document consultation with air quality and environmental agencies during the plan development. In addition, the consultation requirements with Native American Tribes were not addressed in most plans.

*The 2001 RTP prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) was developed by the most extensive public out-reach effort in its history. More than 4,000 residents participated during the 10-month public participation process. This process also included a total of 66 public workshops/hearings, an interactive Web survey and telephone poll of 1,600 registered voters living within the MPOs boundary.*

## **Policy Element**

### Background

State law (Government Code §65080) requires each RTP to have a Policy Element as one of the documents major components. The purpose of the Policy Element is to:

1. Describe the transportation issues and regional needs.
2. Identify and quantify the regional objectives expressed in both short and long-range (10 and 20 years).
3. Maintain the internal consistency with the Financial Element fund estimates.

The Policy Element in the RTPs is expected to describe a vision that will express the region's values and concerns to be addressed over the 20-year time horizon. The Policy Element also addresses legislative, planning, financial and institutional issues and requirements, as well as any areas of institutional consensus (e.g. land use policies). The Policy Element should clearly convey the transportation policies of the region. Federal regulation (Title 40, CFR Sec. 93.106) requires MPOs located in an air quality non-attainment area and with an urbanized area greater

than 200,000 to identify the projected year to reach attainment of National Air Quality Ambient Standards (NAAQS).

#### Evaluation Findings

The Policy Element in the vast majority of RTPs did not describe a vision for the region over the 20-year time horizon. In addition, the majority of the RTPs did not articulate the region's planning, financial, legislative and institutional issues and requirements.

Many of the plans did identify goals and objectives; however these were rarely prioritized

*The RTP prepared by the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency contains a good example of a well-prepared Policy Element. The information contained in the Element addresses all of the items as identified in the RTP Guidelines.*

### **Action Element**

#### Background

The Action Element is the second major component required in all RTPs. It identifies short and long term activities that address regional transportation issues and needs and all modes of transportation are discussed. The Action Element should be divided into two sections. The first section includes a discussion of the preparatory activities such as identification of existing need, assumptions, forecasting and potential alternative actions. The second section addresses the data and conclusions. The Action Element should also identify the investment strategies, alternatives and project priorities beyond what is already programmed in the RTIP.

#### Evaluation Findings

All of the plans identified projects. Unfortunately most plans did not provide an adequate justification for these proposed projects. Without identifying regional needs, it is not possible with any degree of certainty to identify regional solutions. In addition most plans did not relate the projects to regional policies nor funding availability. Many plans just grouped projects and provided a single dollar amount.

Many plans identified a mix of highway, transit and other modal options. But at the same time there was a lack of rationale in determining the 10-year and 20 year mix of projects.

*The Action Element of the RTP prepared by the Tulare County Association of Governments is an excellent example. The Element identifies the status of the all transportation modes along with future projected demand for each of the modes. The RTP utilizes a number of maps to provide an illustration of the transportation needs, both current and future.*

## **Consistency Requirement**

### Background

All RTP elements are required to be consistent within the plan and consistent with other transportation plans within the region. The first four years identified in the Financial Element shall be consistent with the four-year STIP Fund Estimate adopted by the CTC (Government Code §14525). The Goal, Policy and Objective statements shall be consistent with the Financial Element (Government Code Sec. 65080). Projects included in the ITIP and RTIP shall be consistent with the RTP (Government Code §14526).

### Evaluation Findings

Meeting the consistency requirements is perhaps the most problematic aspect of the RTPS. The consistency requirements necessitates the plan be internally consistent and document this consistency. In addition, the plan is to show that projects in the ITIP and the RTIP are consistent with the RTP. Finally, the first four years (funding) in the Financial Element is to be consistent with the four-year STIP fund estimates adopted by the CTC.

At first glance these requirements appear to have easy compliance and straightforward expectations. However none of the RTPs were able to meet the objectives of the consistency requirements.

*The RTP prepared for the Tehama County Transportation Commission specifically identified the 2004 and 2006 STIP funding assumptions along with their long-term revenue estimates. The policies identified in the Policy Element are clearly consistent and with the Financial Element.*

## Performance Measurement

### Background

Each MPO/RTPA is expected to define a set of “program level” transportation system performance measures that reflect the goals and objectives adopted in the RTP. These performance measures are used to evaluate and select plan alternatives. Government Code §14530.1 requires more detailed project specific “objective criteria for measuring system performance and cost effectiveness of candidate projects” in the STIP Guidelines. The program level performance measures in the RTP set the context for judging the effectiveness of the RTP, as a program, to assist in furthering the goals and objectives of the RTP.

### Evaluation Findings

Many of the RTPs included a good faith effort in developing the foundation for a Performance Measurement process. However it appears that there is a lack of common understanding of specific steps and requirements of the Performance Measurement process. The actual foundation of performance measures begins with data collection. The successful process contains ongoing data collection. The analysis of the data demonstrates change and hopefully positive results of the plan, project or planning process. Many of the plans identified topics for measurement. These included congestion, transit trips taken, and safety related issues. There was minimal narrative as to specifically how data would be collected, how measurements would be developed and what criteria for improvements would be established.

*The RTP prepared by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) addressed a total of eight performance measures in the following four categories: Mobility/Accessibility, Highways, Transit and Goods Movement. The specific objective/goal is identified in each of the eight categories along with the year when the objective/goal is expected to be reached. SANDAG also identified the current base value to be used as a starting point.*

## Environmental Considerations

### Background

Federal regulations require the transportation planning agencies consider projects and strategies that protect and enhance the environment. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires agencies to evaluate the

environmental consequences of their proposed actions, including environmental analysis and development of alternatives to minimize adverse environmental impacts is fundamental to the transportation planning process. The RTP shall be in compliance with CEQA (Public Resources Code §21002.1).

#### Evaluation Findings

There was a wide range in the quality of the discussion of environmental concerns in the RTPs. Many were very brief, lacking discussion of how the plan conforms to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). With respect to CEQA requirements, many negative declarations were inappropriately issued. When Program EIRs were prepared, they needed improvements in the analysis of cumulative impacts. In the RTP, the range of alternatives also needed improvement to fulfill the intent of the environmental legislation. .

*The EIR prepared for the San Joaquin Council of Governments was found to be one of the most thorough of RTP EIRs evaluated. The EIR addresses the wide range of environmental impacts anticipated as a result of the transportation projects contained in the RTP. The Executive Summary alone provides a good list of the impacts and possible mitigation measures for the transportation development projects.*

### **Supporting Data**

#### Background

Each RTP should include the following supplemental information either within the document itself or in separate documents:

1. As a basis for the RTP: inventories, analysis of inventory data, forecasts and forecast methodology, technical reports, background papers, air quality and land use plans.
2. Sub-elements of the RTP: seaport/airport plans, transit plans, ITS Early/Strategic Deployment Plans.
3. Other supporting documentation developed as part of the regional planning process.
4. Current environmental documentation.

Supporting and additional information or special studies not included in the RTPs shall be made available to the CTC and the Department upon request (Government Code §14032).



### Evaluation Findings

The inclusion or identification of supporting documentation is generally minimal to non-existent. While all the RTPAs have developed plans over the years, Caltrans staff and others are required to routinely call the RTPA staff for clarification or specific information. It is rare that decision makers at the state or federal level can pick up a plan and find information or documentation that is required by legislation.

*As with the majority of other plans, the RTP prepared by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County did a very good job in documenting its information sources. These sources are identified throughout the document and are easily identified and described.*

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## **Chapter 5**

### **Issues Relating to RTP Development**

#### ***5-A. Purpose and Need Statements: A Foundation for Programming***

It is critical for the MPO or RTPA to establish the rationale for project selection early in the planning process by evaluating how well the transportation system meets the needs of the community. Early public involvement in the planning process is helpful in identifying transportation issues, such as safety, access, mobility and congestion. Using this information, a “Purpose and Needs statement” for each project or group of projects is developed. As part of this process, the plan assesses the impacts, prioritize issues, and develop goals and objectives. Within the Action Element of the RTP, the regional agency needs to clearly describe the identified issues, system deficiencies, and their impacts on the traveling public in order to develop the basis for selection of projects and strategies.

The MPO/RTPA should identify short and long-term projects in the Action Element that address the identified needs and issues, and these projects should be consistent with the goals and objectives stated in the Policy Element. Each agency needs to clearly document a comparative analysis of transportation alternatives, in terms of cost, effectiveness, environmental impacts, and other factors, to show why the selected projects and strategies are the most appropriate solutions to the region’s transportation problems. It is essential that selected projects address the identified transportation issues and are also sensitive to the environment.

The Action Element should also include a statement of the conceptual purpose and need; i.e. a statement of the problem that needs to be solved, to provide justification for project development. Each selected project or activity should then reference the specific regional needs, goals and objectives it is designed to address. The regional transportation needs should become the foundation for the subsequent, detailed statement of project purpose and need in the environmental document for the particular transportation improvement.

A comprehensive Purpose and Needs Statement can be developed from the above information already required in the Action Element.

However Departmental staff review of the RTPs indicates the plans need to more clearly state the need for transportation strategies and improvements and to discuss how selected alternatives meet these needs. Most RTPs fail to explain why the projects are needed or how the projects represent the most appropriate alternatives, in view of environmental constraints. If the RTP does not provide adequate justification, worthwhile projects may be delayed for years or may never be implemented.

#### ***5-B. Building Regional Consensus***

The Regional Transportation Planning Process includes a combination of current social, economic and environmental information as well as projected changes over the life of the plan. For the development of a truly successful planning process, there must be a consensus among the various stakeholders as to the future of the region.

State and federal legislation requires that as part of the process, individuals, public agencies, advocacy groups, public and private goods movement and passenger operators and tribal governments within the region must all have an opportunity to contribute to the planning process. In addition, current adopted plans and strategies such as; general plans, mobility elements, airport land use plans, long range transit plans, habitat set-asides, and future right of way must all be reflected in the development of the RTP.

To assure the intent of all legislation related to public involvement is addressed, RTPs are expected to have a well-developed strategy and program involving; communication, education, outreach and support to obtain maximum amount of public involvement, interagency consultation and review of existing plans, and programs.

Neither the state nor the federal legislation makes any differentiation concerning the size of the region or potential regional social fragmentation.

While most of the RTPAs and most of the MPOs do address some of the needs for community input, not a single plan completely met the requirements of current legislation.

On the positive side, the vast majority of the plans included documentation of a strong outreach program for citizen involvement. Time, effort and resources were spent to bring individuals and groups into the process. Efforts seemed more successful in the rural areas where there was strong community cohesion. In the larger areas, many of the MPOs had difficulty in obtaining a strong community planning interest. Only when plans were being finalized and the implications of the plans were known, did citizens come forth. Unfortunately there was often a negative reaction to many aspects of the plans.

The major deficiency in all plans was the lack of interagency consultation. While consultation might have taken place, it was not generally documented in the plan. A sub-section of interagency consultation but not specifically addressed is community consultation. In the larger MPOs there are distinct communities that often transcend established political boundaries. These communities may be economically disadvantaged, or minority based or culturally unique. In recent years some of these communities have raised the specter of being unduly burdened by the planning process and deprived of community benefits.

### ***5-C. Emerging Trends***

Part of the Regional Transportation Planning Process is the responsibility to identify potential changes to the existing transportation system. Identification of these potential changes sets the stage for the development of future plans and potential strategies for funding. However, because the RTP planning guidelines were based on current state and federal legislative requirements there is not an identified requirement to identify emerging trends in the RTPs. Never-the-less, forward thinking and anticipating emerging trends is a basic characteristic of a good transportation plan.

Many of the RTPs have identified one or more of the following established trends in their RTP; Smart Growth, Goods Movement, Airport Ground Access and Advanced Transportation Systems Technology. Since the events of September 11, 2001, and the heightened perceived needs for safety and security on our roads, bridges, transit systems and airports, staff in the Department anticipates security being a federally mandated issue and addressed in the next cycles of RTP development.

- **Smart Growth**

Smart Growth is a concept with the goal that “development” serves the economy, the community and the environment. RTPs have the potential for meeting smart growth objectives by undertaking several actions. They include: (1) - coordinating land use and transportation; (2) - increasing the availability of high quality transit services; (3) - creating redundancy, resiliency and connectivity within their road networks; (4) - ensuring connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit and road facilities; and (5) - creating places that respect community values and culture, and foster economic development. Unfortunately the objectives of “smart growth” are not specifically acknowledged, and the concept of smart growth appears in only a few of the plans of the largest MPOs and then only in brief passing.

- **Goods Movement**

Goods Movement is becoming a major issue in our State. Since California is evolving to be the fifth major economy in the entire world, there is; (1) - an expanding number of ships in our ports, (2) - the number and size of the trains on the rails is getting larger, and (3) - the expanded growth in the number trucks on the roads are resulting in far more movement in most regions. Most RTPs do not reflect adequate data to assess the current volume of goods movement nor projections of future growth. Due to competition, most private sector companies do not share basic information relating to their current size or plans for expansion. Without such information, the MPOs and RTPAs cannot adequately plan or address, the growth of the goods movement sector.

- **Airport Ground Access**

Commercial airports generate a substantial number of passenger and air cargo ground access trips. With the original planning of airports, ground access was planned to meet the current and expected ultimate capacity of passengers and cargo. With the increase in the need for air cargo capacity, and the increase in the number and size of airplanes, ground access is not keeping up with demand. One of the main reasons for this problem is that ground access relates to local land use and is often not perceived within the regional transportation planning process. Airlines and airport authorities do not take responsibility for ground access and

often resist working cooperatively within the regional transportation planning arena. This resistance is reflected in the absence of detail in the RTPs.

- **Advanced Transportation Systems Technology (ATST)**

ATS technology is a tool for increasing mobility and innovation across all modes and transportation systems. ATST is the application of communications technologies to manage the existing transportation infrastructure. ATST enables various parts or networks within the transportation system to communicate and work in an integrated fashion. Traveler technology can provide real-time traveler information, result in less congestion on the highways and make transit operate more efficiently and be a better alternative. In the goods movement industry, ATST speeds up processing and thus can assist in alleviating congestion on the highways, at weigh stations, in the permitting process and at border crossings. For managers of transportation services such as the Department and regional transportation agencies, cities, counties and transit properties, ATST affords real-time information offers an opportunity to coordinate systems with savings in time, financial and human resources both for agencies and the traveling public.

Federal law and the current RTP Guidelines require RTPs consider the use of technology as appropriate to solve transportation problems. It should be an integral part of the transportation planning process. FHWA is requiring that all federal funded projects create the regional ITS architecture and plans if they intend to use ATST and the RTPs support this by the year 2005.

Most of the MPOs/RTPAs have participated in the development of ITS Deployment Plans. These plans provide a framework and roadmap for using technology in each region to respond to user needs. These plans are a resource for the MPOs/RTPAs and can be incorporated by reference in the RTPs along with the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) list of projects. These Plans will support the programming process and move ITS projects toward design and deployment in an orderly way that is consistent with other types of programmed projects and activities.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **Current Regional Transportation Planning Issues and Recommendations**

#### **6-A. Overview**

The RTP Guidelines were developed by the CTC and the Department to provide each of California's regions with a maximum amount of flexibility and self-direction. The Guidelines consisted of the minimum legal requirements for regional transportation plan development and encouraged each region to add its own regional needs and other plans and activities into the document.

Of course the major purpose of the plan is to adequately support the allocation of State and Federal transportation and transportation planning resources. Department staff review focuses on the degree to which the RTPs either supports or justifies the development of their Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The intent is to develop a dialogue between the CTC, the Department and all of California's Regional Transportation Planning Agencies to assure these issues are addressed in the next generation of the RTPs.

During the preparation of this evaluation report, staff met with representatives from both inside and outside the Department who had knowledge of the RTP process. The purpose of these meetings was to learn from them what, if any, problems did occur during the last RTP cycle. Department staff preparing this report exchanged information in person or by telephone, with representatives of the following Departmental office or outside agencies:

- Office of Regional and Interagency Planning, Division of Transportation Planning
- Office of Advance System Planning, Division of Transportation Planning
- Office of Community Planning, Division of Transportation Planning
- Office of State Planning, Division of Transportation Planning
- Office of Goods Movement, Division of Transportation Planning
- Division of Programming
- A total of five California Department of Transportation District Transportation Planning Offices
- Governors Office of Planning and Research
- Surface Transportation Policy Project
- Rural Counties Task Force
- California Transportation Commission staff

During these meetings, each representative from the agencies above were asked the following two questions:

1. What problems/issues did you encounter during the last cycle of RTPs?
2. What (if any) suggestions could you offer to improve the current RTP process?

### **6-B. Issues and Recommendations**

Below is a list of issues and recommendations that were identified during the interviews. It's divided into two categories: 1) Issues that should be acted upon by the CTC and the Department in the short term (approximately one year) and 2) Long term issues that are expected to take more than one year to complete.

#### **Short-Term Recommendations That Could be Completed in Approximately One Year**

##### **1. Preparation of an RTP Guidelines Supplement**

###### Issue

According to California Government Code §65080(d): *"Each transportation planning agency shall adopt and submit, every three years, an updated regional transportation plan to the California Transportation Commission and the Department of Transportation."* Both the 1999 RTP Guidelines and prior statute required the last cycle of RTPs were due from both MPOs and RTPAs on September 1, 2001. MPOs in California are required to submit their next adopted RTP to the CTC and the Department by September 1, 2004. The RTPAs must submit their RTPs the following year (September 1, 2005). There is not enough time to prepare a complete update of the RTP Guidelines and provide it to the MPOs prior to the completion of the 2004 RTPs.

###### Recommendation

The CTC should request the Department prepare a "supplement" to the 1999 RTP Guidelines. This supplement would be used in the interim until the RTP Guidelines could be updated. Along with communicating new or updated information on RTP preparation, it would contain any changes to the federal or state laws/regulations since the preparation of the last RTP Guidelines. The supplement would also contain any new directions or information to MPOs/RTPAs prior to final preparations of their RTPs. For example, Government Code §65080.3 was added last year authorizing MPOs exceeding 200,000 in population to prepare at least one alternative-planning scenario.

The alternative-planning scenario must accommodate the same population growth but include alternatives to reduce the growth in traffic congestion and more efficiently use the existing transportation infrastructure.

Depending upon the extent of new guidance from the CTC, the supplement should be completed and provided to the MPOs no later than December 2003. This would allow the MPOs at least eight months to respond and incorporate any new guidance into their RTPs prior to the September 1<sup>st</sup> legislatively mandated adoption date.

## **2. Lack of Uniformity in RTP Format**

### Issue

There is a clear lack of format uniformity among many of the RTPs. This lack of uniformity is most pronounced in the RTPs prepared primarily by the larger MPOs. Although the specific RTP format may meet the needs of the particular MPO/RTPA, the varying formats make it quite difficult to obtain a statewide perspective. California Government Code §65080 requires RTPs to have three components: a Policy Element, an Action Element and a Financial Element. Many of the RTPs contained these three distinct elements, however some did not (primarily the larger MPOs).

Lack of uniformity in the format in the RTPs became an issue when conducting any interregional or statewide analysis of the RTPs, such as the California Transportation Plan, preparing any statewide financial or safety analysis based on information in the RTPs.

### Recommendation

The CTC should require future RTP updates to identify where specific information is contained in the RTPs such as the public involvement component, a description of the transportation issues in the region, or the policy and goal statements. This would allow each of the RTPs keep their own format to meet their needs, yet specify where the federal and state required items are located within the plan. The MPO/RTPA should also provide statements the projects contained in the RTIP are consistent with the RTP. Similar statements should also be provided for consistency with other planning documents such as local general plans and air quality management plans (where applicable).

### **3. Interagency Coordination**

#### **Issue**

It is evident that communication and coordination on transportation issues between adjacent MPOs/ RTPAs could be improved. Although there are positive examples of ongoing coordination between regional transportation agencies, some agencies should increase their effort to work with neighboring agencies on transportation issues that impact both regions. These coordination issues include jobs/housing balance and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). In reviewing many of the RTPs, it was obvious the planning efforts ceased at the MPO/ RTPA boundary. Planning and programming issues should also be coordinated between the MPO/ RTPA and the transit agency (or agencies) operating within the MPO/ RTPA boundary. Many MPOs/ RTPAs may already coordinate transportation planning efforts, however this is not documented in the RTP.

#### **Recommendation**

The RTP Guidelines and supplement should stress the importance of coordination between neighboring MPOs/ RTPAs. At minimum, MPOs/ RTPAs should provide a copy of their draft RTPs to neighboring MPOs/ RTPAs. This would provide an opportunity to share information on future transportation planning efforts and would be beneficial particularly when issues impacting the transportation system extend in to the surrounding MPO/ RTPA. Any update to the RTP Guidelines should ensure the RTPs provide documentation of their coordination efforts with neighboring MPOs/ RTPAs. The RTP should also provide some evaluation of this success of this effort.

### **4. Delay in preparation and adoption of RTPs**

#### **Issue**

A number of the RTPs from the last cycle were not adopted by the statutory deadline of September 1, 2001.

#### **Recommendation**

The CTC should contact each MPO in California as soon as possible to ensure the agency will submit an adopted RTP near the legislatively mandated date of September 1, 2004. RTPAs should also be contacted six or eight months prior to the required September 1, 2005 date to submit their adopted RTP to the CTC and the Department. If adopted RTPs are not submitted within an adequate period, the CTC should notify the

MPO/RTPA actions would be taken to delay the acceptance of the regions RTIP until the RTP is completed and adopted.

## **5. *Communication/Coordination with Native American Tribal Governments***

### **Issue**

Although strides have been made by the MPOs/RTPAs concerning government-to-government relations with the federally recognized tribes, some of the RTPs should improve their efforts of consulting with Tribal Governments located within their region on issues impacting the transportation system.

### **Recommendation**

Every federally recognized Tribal Government located with the boundary of an MPO or RTPA should be consulted during the development of the RTP. This requirement must be stressed in the future update of the RTP Guidelines and supplement. The RTPs should document how Tribal Governments were included in the RTP process, and also if they chose not to participate. Documentation and an evaluation of the MPOs/RTPAs efforts in this area should also be included in the RTP.

## **6. *Public involvement in the RTP Process***

### **Issue**

Public involvement is a major component of the RTP process. Federal regulations require that each MPO have a transportation planning process that includes a public involvement program. Each RTP contained a description of the public involvement program as established by the MPO/RTPA during the preparation of the document. Having the public engaged in transportation planning issues that won't be developed for many years (if ever) is a challenge for all MPOs/RTPAs. Overall, the larger MPOs were more successful in obtaining useful input from the public during the development of their RTPs.

### **Recommendation**

Additional training and instruction should be provided to the MPOs/RTPAs and Department staff on successful public involvement techniques utilized by other regional agencies in the state. These effective techniques include greater outreach efforts to members of traditionally underrepresented communities. This more proactive approach is needed to address Environmental Justice issues and receive input on alternatives

earlier in the planning process. Documentation and an evaluation of the MPOs/RTPAs efforts in this area should also be included in the RTP.

## **7. Private sector involvement in the RTP process**

### **Issue**

During interviews of Departmental staff conducted as part of this evaluation, it was noted there should be additional effort by the MPOs/RTPAs to include the goods movement and business community during the development of the RTP. Input from representatives of the goods movement industry such as trucking and rail is important during the development of the RTP. Their participation will ensure goods movement issues are addressed in any long-range transportation planning efforts.

### **Recommendation**

Stress to the MPOs/RTPAs the importance of including representatives of the goods movement and business community who would be impacted by future transportation decisions. These groups could also provide valuable input in this area that could assist the MPO/RTPA during the development of their long-range transportation planning efforts. Additional training should be provided to the MPOs/RTPAs and Departmental staff on the importance of including private sector groups in the RTP process and examples of how this was successfully addressed in other regions. Documentation and an evaluation of the MPOs/RTPAs efforts in this area should also be included in the RTP.

## **8. RTP Environmental Document**

### **Issue**

The detail varied greatly in the Environmental Documents (EDs) prepared for RTPs. Some of the EDs provided detail on the impacts and mitigation efforts for the transportation projects identified in the RTP. Other EDs provided minimal information on the environmental impacts of the transportation projects. Of the total of 44 RTPs in the state, 15 agencies (34%) issued a Negative Declaration (Neg. Dec.) declaring the transportation projects identified in the RTP and RTIP would not adversely impact the community or environment. The majority of these RTP/RTIP Neg. Dec's. were issued by smaller rural RTPAs.

Additional training should also be provided to Departmental staff in each of the district offices on the ED requirements for the RTP.

### Recommendation

First, the RTP Guidelines supplement should provide specific information on the requirements to be included in the ED document for the RTP. The ED should address the regional cumulative impacts resulting from the implementation of the transportation improvements identified in the RTP. These plan level impacts should include, but are not limited to; air quality, water quality, cultural resources, etc. The Program ED should address growth-inducing impacts of the RTP on the region.

Second, training should be provided to MPOs/RTPAs and district Departmental staff on the purpose of the RTPs ED and identify staff within the Department with review responsibilities.

In January 2003, Governor Davis announced his "Build California" initiative to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs in the state. One of the key ideas in this plan directed the Department and the Resources Agency to reduce by a year its environmental process for transportation projects, including adoption of integrated conservation and mitigation planning. It is very important for the Program ED to address cumulative environmental impacts of the transportation projects proposed over the 20-year life of the RTP. The Program ED should also be coordinated with other long-term environmental planning efforts such as habitat conservation plans (HCPs). These EDs are "plan level" providing the impacts on a regional scale, not at the specific "project level".

### **9. Identification of Transportation Control Measures (TCM's)**

#### Issue

Federal air quality regulations require TCM's to be identified in the air quality management plan (AQMP) for nonattainment and maintenance areas. These TCM's in turn, should be identified in the RTP. This requirement is one of the reasons the appropriate regional air quality and transportation agencies should coordinate the development of their respective planning documents. Many of the RTP's in air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas do not specifically identify how TCM's are implemented. TCM's are identified in the air quality management plans prepared by regional air quality agencies.

## Recommendation

An update of the RTP Guidelines should contain a requirement that all RTPs in Federal air quality nonattainment and maintenance have TCM's identified in an approved AQMP should specifically identify the TCM's. This list of TCM's should also include how they are planned to be implemented.

### **10. Project Intent Statements (Purpose and Need) in the RTP**

#### Issue

The Action Element of the RTP is required to include a statement of the conceptual project intent for the projects identified in the Plan. Project Intent Statement is used instead of Purpose and Need Statement because the later was considered more project specific. Project intent reflects a broader description of the projects listed in the RTP. The Action Element identifies the need for the project, which is the transportation issue or deficiency that is to be addressed. It also clearly states how the proposed improvements will address the identified deficiency, or statement of purpose. It must be consistent with the goals and objectives in the policy element.

The project intent statements are critical to successful project development as these statements provide the justification for project funding. Transportation projects are competing for limited funding, and projects that are well justified tend to receive higher funding priority. In addition, the regional transportation needs should become the foundation for the subsequent, detailed statement of project purpose and need in the environmental document for the particular transportation improvement. For example, NEPA requires purpose and need statements at the project level that are consistent with those in the RTP.

Review of the RTPs indicates that plan-level project intent statements are not generally included, however, the basis for developing them is located in the Policy and Action Elements. Further refinement of existing RTP data into plan-level project intent statements is needed. The RTPs often fail to explain why the projects are needed and there is minimal consistency between the purpose and need statement in the RTP and the NEPA document. If the RTP does not provide adequate justification, worthwhile projects may be delayed for years or may never be implemented.



### Recommendation

The CTC and the Department should strengthen the MPOs/RTPAs ability to develop project intent statements in the RTPs by the following:

- Rewrite or update the RTP guidelines to provide more emphasis on the importance of strengthening the project intent statements.
- Develop a format and process for plan-level project intent statements.
- Additional clarification should be provided to Department and MPO/RTPA staff concerning the types of projects that require a project intent statement in the RTP.
- Provide training to Department and MPO/RTPA staff.

### **11. Include Unconstrained Transportation Needs in the RTP**

#### Issue

RTP's are required to identify projects that are financially constrained. However AB 631 (2002) and ACR 32 required the CTC and Department to prepare an assessment of the unmet transportation needs in the state.

#### Recommendation

The RTPs should also include a list of the unconstrained transportation needs within their region. This list should include the needs of the local streets and roads system, unmet transit needs and un-funded operating costs of the regional transportation system. The list would be organized by transportation corridor in order to be in a similar format as the efforts at the state level to comply with AB 631 and ACR 32. This list would be located in the Action Element and not part of the financial projections.

## **Long-Term Recommendations That Would Take More Than One Year to Complete**

### **12. Prepare Update of the RTP Guidelines**

#### Issue

The current RTP Guidelines were adopted by the CTC in December 1999. The document should be updated to include changes in legislation impacting the development of RTPs. An update of the Guidelines could also include any information, clarification or directions on the RTP process.

### Recommendation

The CTC (with assistance from MPOs/RTPAs) should direct the Department to develop an updated CTC Guidelines document.

## **13. Outdated Planning Documents**

### Issue

The RTPs are just one of the planning documents that each region is required to produce. Other documents include General Plans that contain Circulation Elements, Housing Elements and Air Quality Management Plans in non-attainment/maintenance areas. Many general plans are out of date due to rapid development in many cities and counties in California over the past ten years. According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), approximately 42% of the 537 cities and counties in the state have general plans that are ten years or older.

Outdated general plans illustrate just one part of the complex interaction between land use and transportation planning. Up to date general plans provide valuable information to MPOs/RTPAs on future development plans in cities and counties. This information is necessary to assist transportation planners in determining where future demands on the transportation infrastructure may occur.

### Recommendation

The CTC and the Department should work with other state agencies, such as the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The purpose being to determine the feasibility of updating the various planning documents that should be up to date to assist in the determination of future community growth and development of the transportation infrastructure.

## **14. Statewide Financial Information Coordination**

### Issue

Presently, each MPO/RTPA is required to prepare their own fund estimates of federal, state and local transportation funds available to them during the 20-year life of the RTP. Based on the varying levels of expertise at the MPOs/RTPAs, the ability to develop creditable estimates differs from one agency to another. The methodology used by each of the MPOs/RTPAs during the development of financial projections varies widely. In addition, both the FHWA and many MPOs/RTPAs have expressed a desire for the state to provide guidance on the development of these transportation funding estimates.

### Recommendation

The CTC (with MPO/RTPA input) should request the department determine the feasibility of developing the necessary “framework” to be used by MPOs/RTPAs during their preparation of transportation funding estimates. This framework would provide the tools necessary for the MPOs/RTPAs to forecast the federal, state and local transportation funds for their region over the 20-year span of the RTP. This framework will also be a step forward in providing consistency of transportation financial forecasts statewide.

## **15. Transportation Security and Safety**

### Issue

With the present concerns regarding national security, the RTPs should address transportation related safety/security issues.

### Recommendation

The CTC and the Department should consult with the U.S. DOT on the current federal guidance on safety/security issues. This information would be included in the future update of the RTP Guidelines. As a result of the reauthorization of TEA-21, the state should anticipate further action and direction from the federal government in the area of transportation safety and security. California should be positioned to take advantage of any federal funds made available resulting from the reauthorization of TEA-21.

## **16. Varying Timeframes of Various Planning Documents**

### Issue

The timeframes are often different for various planning documents such as RTPs, general plans and air quality management plans. For example MPOs must update their RTPs every three years and RTPAs update their RTPs every four years. State law is vague concerning how often general plans must be updated, current statutes require it must be updated “as often as needed”. Like general plans, air quality management plans are usually updated by the regional air quality agencies on an “as needed basis”.

### Recommendation

The CTC and the Department (with input from MPOs/RTPAs) should first identify the documents that are impacted by and connected to the development of the RTP. Once this list has been prepared, Department staff should begin discussions that address the issue of varying timeframes.

## **17. Performance Measurement**

### Issue

The 1999 RTP Guidelines states: "Each RTPA should define a set of program level transportation performance measures that reflect the goals and objectives adopted in the RTP." Measuring the performance of the overall transportation system has received considerable attention from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the California Department of Transportation over the past three to four years. As with many of the other requirements contained in the 1999 RTP Guidelines, some MPOs/RTPAs did a good job in identifying methods to measure the performance of the transportation system in their regions, while others need improvement.

### Recommendation

The RTP Guidelines should be updated to provide more specific direction on the development of transportation system performance measures.

## **18. Environmental Stewardship**

### Issue

Environmental stewardship in the transportation planning and project delivery processes is a growing movement at the Federal and State levels. The goal is to identify environmental concerns early in the project planning/development process so that better decisions can be made, environmental impacts can be avoided and transportation resources are spent more effectively. Engaging the resource and regulatory agencies in the long-range transportation planning/development process ensures that environmental concerns are identified and data is shared so that transportation plans can be developed that protect and preserve the environment while enhancing mobility.

### Recommendation

This is a complex area where training and education is required for transportation and environmental planners in all levels of government. Several new developments would place the Department in a position to develop training and education to empower planners to work more effectively on environmental issues. These include:

- The new federal transportation reauthorization legislation.
- The Department's own teams working on Cumulative Impacts and Purpose and Need.

- Collaborative planning efforts such as the Merced County pilot program titled “Partnership for Integrated Planning (PIP) and in Riverside County the Community, Environmental and Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP).
- The Department is also working on developing models and tools to enhance our environmental stewardship capabilities. As these efforts are conclude, the CTC and the Department should work with the appropriate Federal and State agencies (FHWA, FTA, EPA, Cal EPA, etc) to develop guidance and training on how environmental stewardship should be included in the RTP process.
- Environmental streamlining will call for the integration of planning, environmental planning, and project development, which will require resources and new procedures for Department staff and partners. To achieve this goal, the Department should rely on increased participation of Environmental Planners in the overall transportation planning effort.

#### **19. Update California Statutes Relating to the RTP process**

##### Issue

Some of the existing statute relating to the RTP process should be amended to bring it up-to-date. California Government Code §65080(G) addresses the items that must be contained in an RTP. Paragraph G states: “For the region defined in Section 66502, the indicators specified in this paragraph shall be supplanted by the performance measurement criteria established pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 66535, if that subdivision is added to the Government Code by Section 1 of the Senate Bill 1995 of the 1999-2000 Regular Session.”

##### Recommendation

Update appropriate sections of statute as necessary. California RTP statues should also conform to federal RTP regulations. For example, if federal regulations call for the RTPs to be updated every five years, then the state requirement should be changed to be more in line with the federal requirement.

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